



State Representative

Bob Duff



Standing Up for Norwalk

Dear Friend,

Another legislative session has concluded at the state Capitol and I am pleased to share with you some of the accomplishments that were achieved on your behalf.

In terms of budgetary issues, this was a much better year than last. If you recall, Connecticut, like most states, was weighed down with a deficit. Tough decisions were made but we weathered the storm. Our position is stronger now and legislators were able to bring home additional state aid to our communities.

Norwalk received an additional \$937,033 from the 2004 fiscal year, which is \$531,825 higher than the governor's recommendation. Property tax relief is one of my major initiatives and these funds will help lessen the burden on home owners.

Some other important bills that passed this year were:

- Funding to immediately purchase new rail cars for Metro North
- Reinstating sales tax free week for school children in August
- Forcing new power lines to be underground and away from homes and schools
- Protecting Long Island Sound by continuing the moratorium on new underwater lines
- Cleaning our air with the "Clean Cars" and "Climate Change" bills
- Ethics reform to open the windows and let the light into our state government
- ConnPACE reforms for seniors

With so many potential distractions this year, I am proud that the General Assembly finished its business on time and with a balanced budget. I hope that you stay in touch with your emails, letters, phone calls and chats around town. It's my honor to be your representative and serve you at our state Capitol.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Duff", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Representative Duff Achieves 100% Voting Record in 2004 Session

For the third consecutive year, I am proud to share with you that I have earned a 100% voting record in the House of Representatives.

Education & Children's Needs

Education Funding for Norwalk

As stated in my opening letter, Norwalk is slated to receive more funding thanks to the budget I supported. The bulk of the increased aid is coming from the Priority School grant (\$500,000) and School Readiness funding (\$239,581). Also, there are increases in the Early Reading Success program, Special Education and the Education Cost Sharing formula.

Childhood Nutrition and Exercise in Schools

To address the problem of childhood obesity, I supported legislation to encourage healthy eating among students as well as exercise and physical activity. As of September 1, 2004, schools are required to make dairy products, including low fat dairy products, water, natural fruit juices, and fresh or dried fruit available for purchase.

As a second component, the bill requires that all full-day students must have at least a twenty minute lunch break. Also, students in kindergarten to grade five must have a daily period of physical exercise.

Don't Forget – Sales Tax Free Week

Sales Tax Free Week for clothing and footwear costing less than \$300 is the fourth week of August (August 22nd -28th).

Environmental Protection and Power Lines Legislation

Burying Power Lines

I co-sponsored common sense legislation calling for new high-tension power lines to be buried underground. This landmark legislation, which will affect our community during the Middletown to Norwalk upgrade, requires the lines to be kept away from schools, homes, daycare centers and playgrounds. Electromagnetic Fields (EMFs) will now be a consideration in approving or denying an application.

Protecting Long Island Sound

Once again, I supported a moratorium on electric power line, gas pipeline, or telecommunications crossings of Long Island Sound until June 3, 2005. Considering the Cross Sound Cable controversy in New Haven, the moratorium is more important than ever.

Clean Cars

I co-sponsored legislation that will reduce the harmful toxins cars emit. According to published reports, 40% of our hazardous air pollutants come from motor vehicle emissions. This, of course, leads to asthma, respiratory problems and other health related complications. Support came from both the business and environmental community.



Open Space

I led the effort this year to protect the unspoiled land around our reservoirs. In the past few years, multi-national companies have bought the water companies and in turn the reservoirs around the state. In some instances these firms have legally abandoned the reservoirs and then sold off the land for development to the highest bidder. Obviously, this puts a strain on local resources such as schools, roads and traffic - not to mention air pollution. By halting abandonment and development, this legislation ensures that we are planning for our future water supply while protecting open space at the same time.

Improving Air Quality

In an effort to improve our environment, I co-sponsored and voted for legislation that addresses greenhouse gas emissions and global warming. This new legislation sets strict greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals. These harmful gases are to be reduced to year 1990 levels by January 1, 2010 and 10% below year 1990 levels by January 1, 2020.

Transportation

New Trains

I wholeheartedly cast my vote in the affirmative to set aside much needed funding for the immediate purchase of rail cars. The General Assembly provided an additional \$25 million to get new trains to commuters as soon as possible.

While it is only a beginning, I am pleased that the legislature took this important step. It is an area where I will continue to direct my attention and fight for a long-range plan to replace all of the old rail cars. Commuters shouldn't face the type of headaches and misery that plagued them last winter.

I stood with commuters at the South Norwalk and East Norwalk train stations last February during the train crisis and I appreciate all the feedback I received. It was your help and advocacy that got the attention of so many lawmakers.



Getting Trucks off the Road

The new Bridgeport Barge Feeder System should be up and running soon. Barges, loaded with cargo, will come into port and load goods onto trucks and take them east of us to their desired location. According to a legislative report, this could help take an estimated 385 trucks off of I-95 per week. It is an exciting project that has proposals to expand in other ports throughout the state.

Seniors' & Veterans' Protection

Re-Importing Drugs from Canada for ConnPACE

I supported a new law that requires the state of Connecticut to evaluate the feasibility of re-importing prescription drugs from Canada. The report will weigh the cost effectiveness, any legal implications, and health and safety issues that may come from this program. With the high cost of medications and the amount of burden it places on our seniors, I will be eagerly awaiting this report.

Estate Recovery and Asset Test for ConnPACE Repealed

As promised, the state of Connecticut repealed the never enforced ConnPACE asset test and estate recovery provision. I voted against these draconian provisions last year and was pleased to support the repeal. It makes us all breathe a sigh of relief.

Confused about the Federal Medicare Bill?

Recently, I held two briefings in Norwalk to aid seniors in their decision with regard to the new federal Medicare legislation. It is a very complicated new law. Most of the confusion lies with the prescription drug cards and the 40 choices that are offered. I urge you to contact my office and I will put you in touch with trained professionals who can help you make an informed choice. Please, don't rush into any decisions.



Rep. Duff speaks at a Veterans' Memorial Ceremony.

Veterans' Property Tax Benefits

I voted for a bill that enables both active duty servicemen and women and veterans or their immediate families to continue to receive certain veterans' property tax exemptions if they move to a new town within that assessment year. This new law requires tax assessors to provide a certificate that verifies eligibility to each person who receives an exemption. In this time of war, the General Assembly reaffirmed its commitment to Connecticut's honorable servicemen and women.

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